



Information Architecture

101

Untangling the webs we weave

Who am I?

- Human Factors Engineer
- 12 years of designing systems to fit humans

Working definition

- Information Architecture is:
An emerging discipline that seeks to structure, organise and label information in such a way that humans can find and manage it.

User Experience (UX)

- Human Factors (Ergonomics)
- Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)
- Usability Engineering (UE)
- Information Architecture (IA)
- Interaction Design (IxD)

Concept of IA

- Helping people find information
- Based on information seeking behaviours and prior knowledge of an audience
- It's like sound design for movies
- When it's done well, nobody notices it

Systems

- Search systems
- Navigation systems
- Semantic networks

Methods

- User research
- Content analysis
- Competitive analysis
- Search log, usage and click-path analysis
- Card Sorting

Deliverables

- Wireframes
- Blueprints / Site maps
- Metadata schemas
- Controlled vocabularies
- Presented in an Interaction Specification

Wireframes

Policies & procedures

 [\[A\]A](#)

- [Introduction](#)
- [Schools](#)
- [TAFE](#)
- [Corporate](#)

This website lists all current policies, procedures and guidelines. They have been divided into documents pertaining specifically to schools, [TAFE](#), and corporate.

The [help](#) content includes an [explanation of the new policy layouts](#) and the [difference between policies, procedures and guidelines](#).

The search box to the right will search all policies, procedures and guidelines. Below it is a link to show a complete alphabetical listing of the documents.

Choose your area from below to find all the policies, procedures and guidelines that apply to:

[Schools](#)
All the policies procedures and guidelines that apply to schools.

[TAFE](#)
All the policies procedures and guidelines that apply to [TAFE](#).

[Corporate](#)
All the policies procedures and guidelines that apply to corporate.

Note:
Most existing policies are on the website in the [PDF](#) format. As each policy document is revised, it will be placed on the site in [HTML](#) format.

Search all areas
[A-Z of all policies, procedures...](#)

Feedback & corrections

For feedback, corrections and policy information, contact the Policy Librarian:
policies@det.nsw.gov.au
 (02) 9561 1234

What you need to know when [creating policies](#)

Related areas

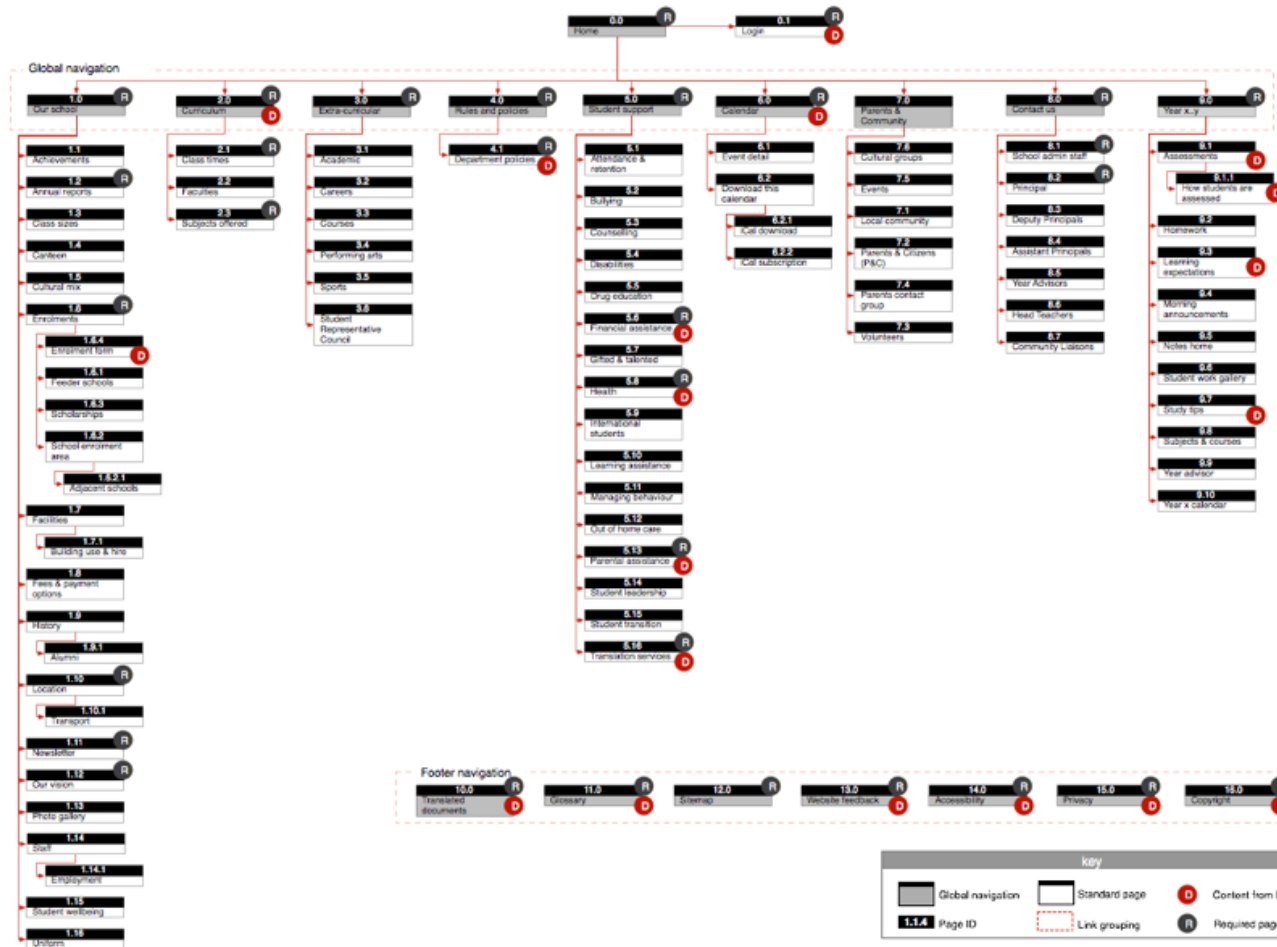
[Emergencies & disasters](#)

[Relevant legislation](#)

[Premier's circulars & memoranda](#)
 (external link)



Blueprints



Metadata

```
<META http-equiv=Content-Type content="text/html; charset=windows-1252">  
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Curtin University, Perth Australia" name=Description>  
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name=Keywords>  
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<META content="Robs 7200:Documents:ASCILITE97 StyleSheet2" name=Template>  
<META content="MSHTML 5.50.4522.1800" name=GENERATOR>
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Controlled vocabulary

- Equivalent terms
- Preferred terms
- Associative relationships
- Hierarchical

IA in action

- NSW Dept. of Education & Training
- Staff complained about the Intranet
- Suspected it was wasting time and money
- Interim Intranet re-design for most important information

Findings

User research revealed:

- Policies the most important
- All participants expressed frustration

Typical quote

“Accessing policies is almost a logic that defies me.

It was under “N” for “New South Wales”. How stupid is that?”

- Schools participant looking for the suspension policy

State of play

- Poorly structured documents
- Unable to tell if they are current
- Named inconsistently
- Spread over many sites

How they got there

- Intranet started small
- Many departmental units; many authors
- IT services available to all
- No governance or standards
- Constant re-organisation; no maintenance
- Intranet evolves

Result

One BIG mess

Problem 1

- No definitions for:
 - Policies
 - Procedures
 - Guidelines
- Solution:
 - Create concise, plain English definitions for each document type and make them known

Problem 2

- Lack of naming convention
 - Many started with “Policy for” or “NSW”
- Solution:
 - Topic, Action [Document type]

Problem 2

Guidelines For State Directors, Directors Of AMES,
Institute Directors And District Superintendents For The
Implementation Of The Working With Children Check
And Completions Of Prohibited Employment Declaration

=

Recruitment, Working with children check [Guideline]

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

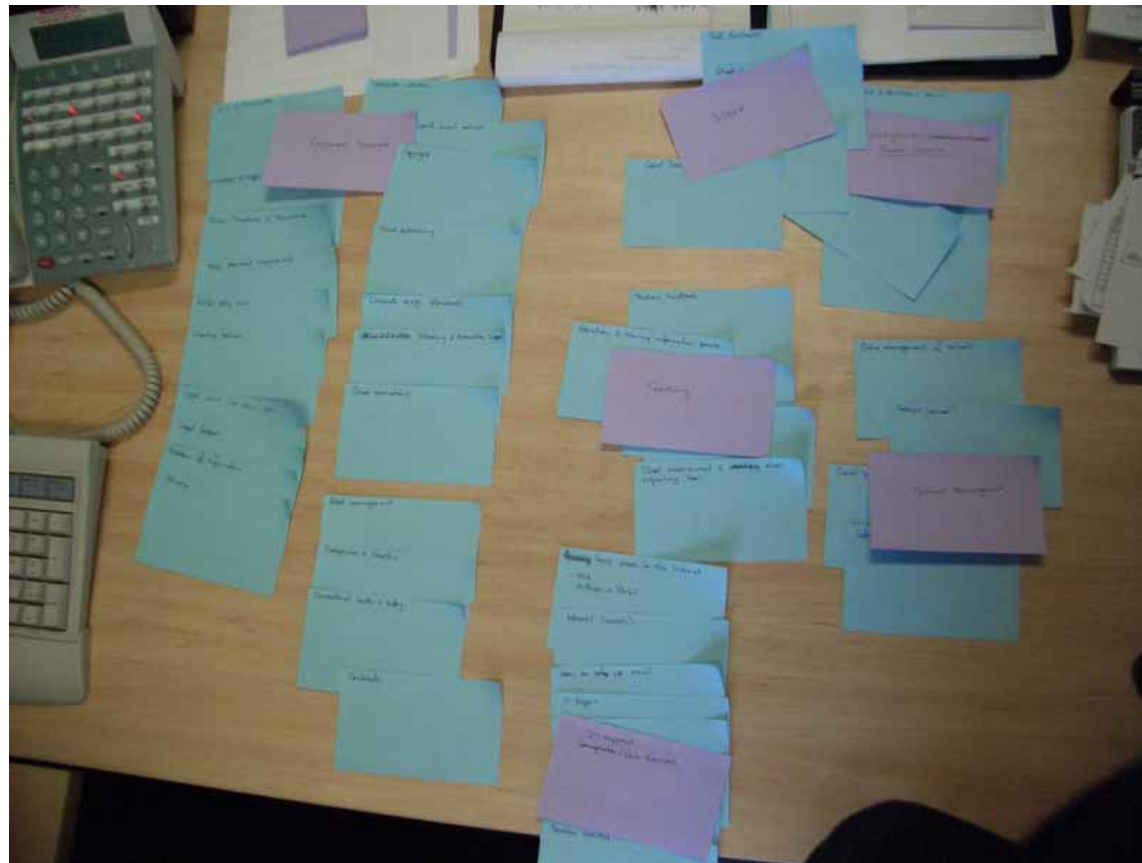
=

Fluorescent lights, Replacing leaking starters
[Procedure]

Problem 3

- Taxonomy:
 - Disparate groups bundled, empty topics, 'general' & 'other' topics, fad terms
- Solution:
 - Split: TAFE, Schools & Corporate
 - Use card sorting to guide grouping
 - Use labels participants used

Open Card Sort



Closed Card Sort



Problem 4

- Document structure:
 - Hard to find necessary information
 - Impossible to know validity
- Solution:
 - Remove bureaucratic jargon
 - Push administration data to the end
 - Clearly show publish date and validity
 - Create visual hierarchy

Problem 5

- Lack of central governance:
 - Restructures = lack of ownership
 - Published in many places
- Solution:
 - Create a publishing process
 - Assign a Librarian and Editor

Usability testing

- Common scenarios from the field
- Tested ability to find & recognise the correct document, then operational information

Roll-out

- Place current documents in new taxonomy
- Start re-publishing documents
- Periodically test as part of auditing

More information

- IA Groups in Sydney:
 - ANZSI NSW (nswbranch@aussi.org)
 - IA-Peers (eric.scheid@ironclad.net.au)
- Web resources:
 - <http://iainstitute.org/>
 - <http://www.iawiki.net/>
- Authors:
 - Louis Rosenfeld & Peter Morville
 - Christina Wodtke

Questions?

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